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PAGE 01 ROME 05657 052021Z

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FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, VT, IS

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN-JEWISH MEETING IN VENICE (MARCH 28-30)

1. SUMMARY: AT JUDEO-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE HELD IN VENCIE MARCH 28-30, VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES SIGNED COMMUNIQUE WHICH EXPLICITLY REJECTS PROSELYTISM AMONG JEWS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC-JEWISH LIAISON COMMITTEE TOOK PLACE IN VENICE MARCH 28-30. THE LIAISON COMMITTEE IS COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OF THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH COMMITTEE FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSULTATIONS (IJCIC). PREVIOUS MEETINGS WERE HELD IN PARIS, MARSEILLE, ANTWERP, ROME AND JERUSALEM. IN JEWISH DELEGATION WERE RABBI HENRY SIEGMAN, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA, DR. GERHART RIEGNER, SECRETARY GENERAL, WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS (GENEVA), AND ZACHARIAH SHUSTER, AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE (PARIS). AMONG

CATHOLIC PARTICIPANTS WERE BISHOP TORRELLA, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY AND CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES FROM U.S., FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY. THE DISCUSSION WAS CENTERED ON A PAPER ON "THE MISSION AND WITNESS OF THE CHURCH," IN WHICH A CATHOLIC EXPERT DEVELOPED THREE KEY POINTS WHICH ARE REITERATED IN OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE:

--THE CHURCH CLEARLY REJECTS "EVERY SORT OF PROSELYTISM";

-- THE CHURCH EXCLUDES "EVERY SORT OF JUDGMENT EXPRESSIVE OF DISCRIMINATION, CONTEMPT OR RESTRICTION AGAINST JEWS";

-- THE CHURCH ENCOURAGES "ALL EFFORTS TO GET TO KNOW THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL, STARTING WITH BIBLE AND EXPLORING IN DEPTH THE SPIRIT, EXISTENCE, HISTORY AND MISSION OF ISRAEL."

3. IN ADDITION TO SUBJECT OF PROSELYTISM, REPORTS WERE GIVEN ON THE FOLLOWING: THE PROGRAM WHEREBY GROUP OF CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS FROM PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE STUDY AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY; THE RECENT DESIGNATION BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY OF PERMANENT WORKING GROUP ON "THE CHURCH AND JUDAISM"; AND ON JOINT PROGRAMS TO FURTHER JEWISH-CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING IN THE U.S. FINAL COMMUNIQUE ALSO REFERS TO THE APPRECIATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ROME 05657 052021Z

EXPRESSED BY THE JEWISH DELEGATES TO "THE SUPPORT GIVEN TO LATIN AMERICAN JEWRY BY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA IN THE FACE OF ANTI-SEMITIC MANIFESTATIONS."

4. COMMENT: JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES WERE PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF MEETING. THE UNQUALIFIED CONDEMNATION OF CATHOLIC PROSELYTISM AMONG JEWS AND REJECTION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST JEWS WERE AMONG THE IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES SOUGHT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE JUDEO-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE SOME 12 YEARS AGO, FOLLOWING VATICAN COUNCIL II. RABBI SIEGMAN WAS QUICK TO NOTE THAT THE CONDEMNATION OF PROSELYTISM WAS A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO GREATER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO FAITHS.

5. A PARTICIPANT IN THE DIALOGUE HAS TOLD US THAT IN CONTRAST TO LAST YEAR'S MEETING IN JERUSALEM (MARCH 1976)-- WHERE ACERIMONY WAS EVIDENT ON STATUS

OF HOLY SHRINES IN JERUSALEM AND ON ISSUE WHETHER
COMMITTEE'S COMMUNIQUE SHOULD CONDEMN EFFORTS
TO EQUATE "ZIONISM WITH RACISM"-- THE VENICE
MEETING WAS HELD IN HARMONIOUS ATMOSPHERE. HE ALSO
STATED THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD ON A THEOLOGICAL
PLANE AND AS USUAL THE VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES
SHIED AWAY FROM POLITICAL SUBJECTS, PARTICULARLY AS
THEY RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST. HE BRANDED AS
"SPECULATIVE" ITALIAN PRESS COMMENTS INTERPRETING
COMMUNIQUE'S REFERENCES TO "ISRAEL," HE SAID, WERE
DESIGNED TO REFER TO BIBLICAL ENTITY. WE TEND TO
AGREE. VATICAN FOREIGN POLICY IS THE PRESERVE OF
THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE AND NO REPRESENTATIVE OF
THIS ENTITY WAS PRESENT AT THE VENICE MEETING.
SIMILARLY, HE DENIED A PRESS STORY (IN LA STAMPA
APRIL 5) TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE HAD BEEN
AGREEMENT AT VENICE TO HAVE A "SUMMIT IN VIENNA"
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PAGE 04 ROME 05657 052021Z

OF REPRESENTATIVES OF MOSLEMS, JEWS AND CHRISTIANS.
SINCE LA STAMPA'S STORY IS DATED "VATICAN CITY,"
WE CANNOT EXCLUDE AT THIS POINT THE POSSIBILITY
THAT THE IDEA IS NOT A "TRIAL BALLOON." THE VATICAN,
WHICH HOLDS PARALLEL DIALOGUES WITH THE MOSLEMS
AND THE JEWS, ADVOCATES A HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE
AMONG THE THREE MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS AND WOULD
PROBABLY FAVOR A TRIPARTITE DIALOGUE TO ADVANCE
THIS COEXISTENCE. GARDNER

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